

(JULY 1, 2004 TO JUNE 30, 2005)

## What is child abuse or neglect?

Under Virginia law, an abused or neglected child is any child under 18 whose parent, or any other person responsible for the care of the child, does any or all of the following:

- \* causes, or threatens to cause, a physical or mental injury except for an accident.
- \* fails to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care or caring support.
- \* abandons the child.
- \* fails to provide the kind of supervision necessary for a child's age or level of development.
- \* commits, or allows to be committed, any illegal sexual act involving the child—including incest, rape, fondling, indecent exposure, prostitution—or allows the child to be used in any sexually explicit visual material.

Child abuse is not usually just one physical attack or just one instance of failure to meet a child's most basic needs. Usually child abuse is a pattern of behavior which takes place over a period of time. The longer child abuse continues, the more serious it becomes, and the more difficult it is to stop.

## How many children were reported as victims of maltreatment in Virginia?

From July of 2004 through June of 2005, **45,078** children were reported as possible victims of abuse and/or neglect in **30,507** reports to Virginia's city and county departments of social services.

## Were all these reports founded?

Founded means that a review of the facts met the legal criteria for abuse. **7,011** children were victims in **4,661** founded reports of child abuse and/or neglect.

In addition, **28,036** were involved in **18,753** reports that received a family assessment through the Assessment Response Track. This means that a Child Protective Services worker completed a family services needs assessment with these families and developed a written safety plan, if needed.

## How many children died as a result of child abuse/neglect?

**26** children in Virginia died from injuries attributable to abuse and/or neglect in fiscal year 2005—**19** of these children (73%) were aged 3 or under.

## Who were the children?

- \* **53%** of all victims of child abuse and neglect were children aged 7 or under. **75%** of all victims were children aged 12 and under.
- \* **55%** of all victims were white, **37%** were black, **4%** were multiracial and less than **1%** were Asian.

## What were types of maltreatment?

In some reports, more than one type of maltreatment may have occurred. Of all the instances of maltreatment in completed founded investigations and assessments where needed services were identified:

- \* **58.2%** of the maltreatment was due to physical neglect, a failure to provide food, clothing, shelter or supervision to the child to the extent that the child's health was endangered.
- \* **23.1%** of the maltreatment was due to physical abuse.
- \* **14.9%** of the maltreatment was due to sexual abuse.
- \* **2.3%** of the maltreatment was due to medical neglect.
- \* **1.5%** of the maltreatment was due to mental abuse/neglect.

## Who are the abusers?

Abusive parents can be your friends, your neighbors or your relatives. Child maltreatment affects all economic, racial, social, ethnic and religious groups.

## What is the cost of child abuse and neglect in monetary and human terms?

The cost of child abuse and neglect in the United States is estimated at \$258 million per day, according to a study by Prevent Child Abuse America.

## How can child abuse and neglect be prevented?

Recognize the warning signs: parents under chronic stress, children exhibiting negative and anxious behaviors, signs of physical abuse.

Encourage families under stress to seek out support services. Call the **1-800-CHILDREN** support line. Report suspected child abuse and neglect. Call your local social services department or call the Virginia Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline at **1-800-552-7096**.

**Every 14 days**  
a child dies from  
abuse or neglect.<sup>1</sup>

**Every 75 minutes**  
a child is abused  
or neglected.<sup>1</sup>

**Every 7 days**  
a child aged 19 or  
under is murdered.<sup>2</sup>

# MOMENTS IN VIRGINIA

**Every 2 hours**  
a new family  
arrives at a domestic  
violence shelter.<sup>3</sup>

In an average  
moment there are  
**7,600 children**  
**in foster care**  
in Virginia.<sup>1</sup>



**Every 3 hours**  
a child is served  
by a domestic  
violence program.<sup>3</sup>

**Every 4 hours**  
a child witnesses  
an act of domestic  
violence.<sup>3</sup>

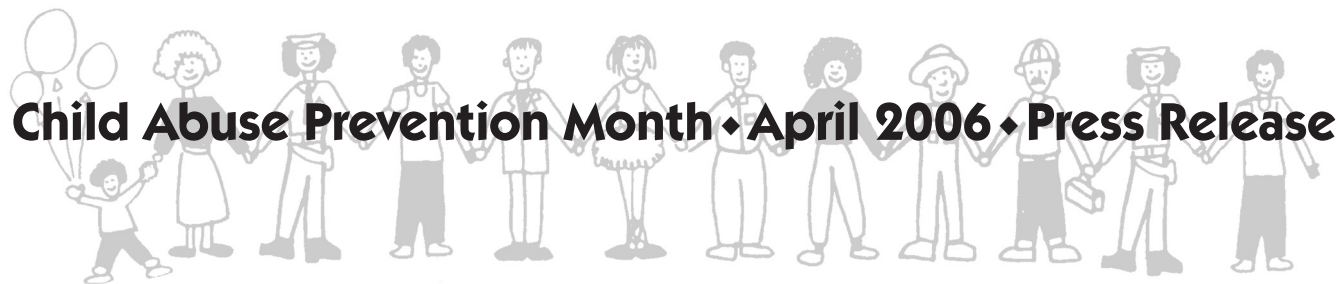
**Every 55 minutes**  
a juvenile commits  
a violent crime.<sup>2</sup>

**Every 4.5 hours**  
a victim seeks shelter from a domestic violence  
program, but is denied for lack of space.<sup>3</sup>

1. Virginia Department of Social Services, 2005

2. Virginia State Police

3. VAdat: The Virginia Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence Data Collection System 2004



## **SAMPLE PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR RELEASE:**       Xxxxx 00, 2006

**CONTACT:**           Name, Organization  
                            Phone Number

### **Doing the Right Thing for Children!**

Community efforts to do the right thing for children is gaining momentum as individuals better understand what they can do to prevent child abuse and neglect.

Voters in Virginia have indicated in a recent poll<sup>1</sup> that they were more concerned about public officials' positions on child centered issues such as after school programs, child health care and child abuse prevention than on any other topic or issue.

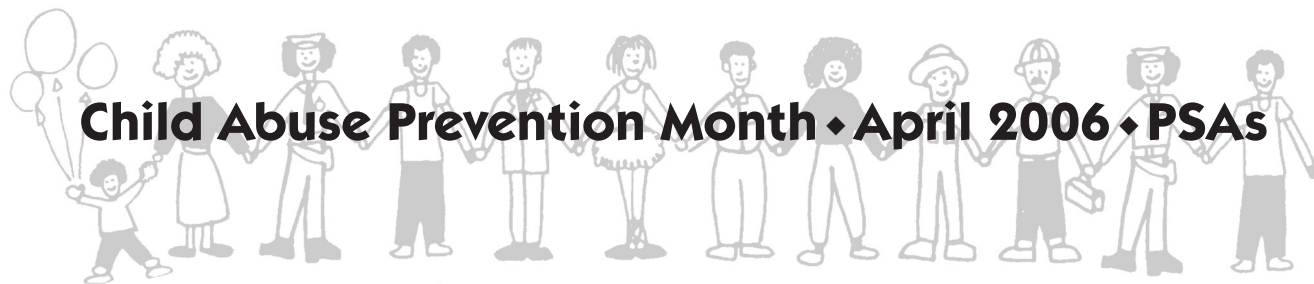
Much in the same way that people understand prevention as it relates to other health and safety issues, they have indicated the belief that support to children and families is an effective child abuse and neglect prevention strategy.

Since the release of a child abuse prevention study conducted by Washington, D.C. based Frameworks Institute, prevention advocates have been driving home new messages to the public. The study presented to Prevent Child Abuse America, recommended that advocates provide the public with practical and easy prevention steps. One of those steps asked individuals to show support for public policy makers with strong child and family centered agendas.

At least three statewide agencies have created plans to support communities in their prevention efforts. The Virginia Department of Social Services in partnership with Prevent Child Abuse Virginia, the Virginia Department of Health and the Governor's Office on Substance Abuse Prevention all have plans focused on interconnecting areas of prevention. Representatives are scheduled to meet in April to assess how they can collaborate.

Whether prevention is accomplished on the local level by providing parenting classes or increasing support to families under stress, our communities will benefit from doing the right thing for children.

1. Mason-Dixon poll 2005



## PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **:10—April is Child Abuse Prevention Month in Virginia.**

This April, wear a blue ribbon to show that you care... and help us make sure that it doesn't hurt to be a child.

**:30—Prevention.** We understand it when it comes to driving too fast, wearing a seat belt, having enough air in our tires. Why don't we understand it when it comes to child abuse and neglect. Prevention starts with you. Find out how by calling 1-800-CHILDREN.

### **:60—Did you hug your child this morning? Did you tell him you love him?**

We all have expectations for our children. Did you know you can help him reach those expectations by increasing your parenting skills? Prevention isn't just knowing what not to do, it's also knowing what to do. Prevention starts with you. Call 1-800-CHILDREN for more information.

**:60—April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.** What will it take to prevent child abuse and neglect? Parents who understand that what they do and say can affect a child for a lifetime. Community members who show they are part of a neighborhood invested in the success of children and families. What can prevent child abuse and neglect? People who care about prevention. We can prevent child abuse and neglect. Find out how because it starts with you.



# *Proclamation*

By virtue of the authority vested in me, I hereby proclaim the month of April as Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Whereas, preventing child abuse and neglect is a community problem that depends on involvement among people throughout the community; and

Whereas, child maltreatment occurs when people find themselves in stressful situations, without community resources, and don't know how to cope; and

Whereas, the majority of child abuse cases stem from situations and conditions that are preventable in an engaged and supportive community; and

Whereas, all citizens should become involved in supporting families in raising their children in a safe, nurturing environment; and

Whereas, effective child abuse prevention programs succeed because of partnerships created among social service agencies, schools, faith communities, civic organizations, law enforcement agencies, and the business community; and

Therefore, I do hereby proclaim April as Child Abuse Prevention Month in \_\_\_\_\_ and call upon all citizens, community agencies, faith groups, medical facilities, and businesses to increase their participation in our efforts to support families, thereby preventing child abuse and strengthening the communities in which we live.

Now therefore I, \_\_\_\_\_, do hereby recognize April 2006 as Child Abuse Prevention Month in \_\_\_\_\_ and I call this observance to the attention of all our citizens.

